
Preface: A Leadership Leap

A lot of people experience the world with the same incredulity as when a magician suddenly pulls a rabbit out of a hat . . .

—Jostein Gaarder (1996, p.14)

In explaining the work of philosophers to the character of a 14-year-old schoolgirl in *Sophie's World*, Gaarder (1996) uses the metaphor of a white rabbit pulled from a magician's hat. For various reasons, he observes, the inclination to question the nature of the world becomes diminished in many people. As they become caught up in everyday affairs, their fundamental questions about the world get pushed into the background. They “crawl deep into the rabbit's fur,” opting for a more comfortable, less inquisitive orientation to the nature of their existence (p. 17). Philosophers, on the other hand, “climb up the fine hairs of the rabbit's fur in order to stare right into the magician's eyes” (p.14). It is this pursuit of answers to fundamental questions about the origin, purpose, and destination of the universe, according to Gaarder, that distinguishes philosophers from the majority of the residents of the world.

Like philosophers, leaders seek additional perspective by moving in mind and spirit to the ends of what is familiar and comfortable. They pursue answers to questions that challenge established perceptions of what, when, where, why, and how. Leaders, moreover, distinguish themselves beyond the challenges associated with intellectual exploration. They act on new insight as it evolves. Leaders do not move to the edge merely to see what they might see. They step forward, leaping the gap between what is familiar but suspect

to that which is more accurate and productive. In this manner, new frontiers are bridged to meaningful adjustments in the conduct of human affairs.

The intent of a prior work, *Connecting Leadership to the Brain* (Dickmann & Stanford-Blair, 2002), was to move leadership to the ends of the hairs of the rabbit—to help leaders engage breakthrough knowledge about human capacity for learning and achievement. The assumption was that emerging intelligence research and theory favorably informs leaders about how to best influence the achievement of worthy goals. There is more work to be done, however, in helping leaders make the leap from informed perception to compatible practice. Perception of the merits of intelligence-friendly leadership will result in little more than intellectual sound and fury if action does not follow insight.

To that end, *Leading With the Brain in Mind* is a practitioner's book that details practical leadership strategies and practices. It aspires to both encourage and facilitate a leap to a new leadership paradigm—one that is more mindful of the nature and nurture of intelligence in the process of influencing others toward the achievement of goals.